

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 30, 2007

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
Chairman, House Committee
on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim McCrery
Ranking Member, House Committee
on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael R. McNulty
Chairman, Subcommittee on Social Security
House Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Johnson
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Social Security
House Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel, Chairman McNulty, Ranking Member McCrery and Ranking Member Johnson:

We respectfully request a hearing of the Committee to examine the impact of the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO-WEP) on certain Social Security beneficiaries. Specifically we would like the Committee to consider H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act of 2007 which would eliminate both the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. H.R. 82 currently has 308 cosponsors.

The Windfall Elimination Provision was intended to eliminate a perceived advantage given to people who also had pensions from non-Social Security-covered employment. However, the WEP often hurts workers who were employed by the government, particularly lower paid workers who receive smaller government pensions. Because of the WEP, retirees with a non-covered government pension often discover, upon retirement, that their Social Security benefits are reduced by up to 50 percent. For many retirees this reduction is unanticipated.

The Government Pension Offset often substantially reduces or eliminates the spousal or widow's benefit of those eligible for a federal, state, or local government pension not covered by Social Security. The GPO is particularly harmful to government retirees with small pensions, and it also disproportionately affects women.

More than 50 percent of Maine's state and local government employees are not covered by Social Security and are therefore likely to be affected by the GPO. In addition, many retirees are unprepared for the reduction in their spousal benefits caused by the GPO.

The WEP-GPO has caused undue hardship to many of our constituents and we urge the Committee to hold a hearing on this important issue as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Tom Allen
Member of Congress



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress